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*Nineteenth of April.*



ADDRESS

IN THE

OLD CONCORD MEETING HOUSE

APRIL 19, 1894

BY

E. R. HOAR

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*Mr. President, Your Excellency, Your Honor,  
Fellow Citizens :*

IT has been my privilege, through a long life now nearing its close, to participate in all the public celebrations of this historic day by the people of Concord; and its memories are very dear to my heart.

The first was in 1825, almost seventy years ago, when as a schoolboy, upon this spot, I listened to the first great historical oration, and perhaps the best,—pronounced by that master of history and oratory, Edward Everett.

The second, at which I had the honor to preside, was the seventy-fifth anniversary in 1850, when Lexington, Acton, and other towns whose citizens had a special interest in the day, united with Concord to celebrate it. The Governor and Council and the General Court, with the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company as escort, testified by their presence the significance of the occasion.

At the centennial in 1875, we had as guests the President of the United States and his Cabinet, the Governors of all the New England

States, each escorted by his chosen military company, and many of the most distinguished men in civil and military life of the whole country. We had 60,000 people in attendance in Concord, all we could attend to; and Lexington had another magnificent celebration, perhaps with even a more numerous crowd.

I mention these occasions, to which perhaps should be added a mention of the Lexington celebration of 1835, and one or two in Acton worthy of the day, at which I have been present, in order to ask your attention to the steadiness with which interest in the 19th of April, local, state, and national, has grown and increased, as we consider its far-reaching relations and consequences.

And yet another thought connected with its observance presents itself, as we meet today to commemorate the 19th of April, by the act of the General Court of which your Excellency's proclamation has given notice, which makes the day a Massachusetts holiday. It is indeed, and should be forever, *the* Massachusetts holiday.

Your Excellency has fitly called it "Patriots' Day," and so it is; but it has no exclusive title to that appellation. The 17th of June is a Patriots' Day, and the Connecticut General Putnam commanded in part; it was a Patriots' Day that saw Washington take command of the

American Army at Cambridge; Bennington and Trenton, Saratoga and Yorktown, each furnished a day for patriotic memory and patriotic thanksgiving. But in each Massachusetts participated with others in the triumph and the glory. The 4th of July is eminently "Patriots' Day" for all American citizens. But this day, the 19th of April, 1775, has a relation to Massachusetts more intimate and sacred than any other day can have; a day on whose anniversary it has been well to provide by law that her children should keep holiday; our mother's birthday; for on this day, 119 years ago, the *Commonwealth of Massachusetts was born!*

Think of it! Plymouth and the Massachusetts were English Colonies. The province of Massachusetts Bay was a British province. In the French and Indian Wars our fathers, subjects of the English King, served under officers commissioned by the Royal Governor. All writs ran in the King's name. On the house where the Assembly of the province met, the Royal Arms were emblazoned (they are there to this day, like cannon captured in battle, telling their story of our victory!) and the Royal flag waved over it. The first and second Congresses, who were gathered here to devise measures for the defense of liberty in Massachusetts, when this roof-tree echoed the voices of Warren and Han-

cock and Samuel Adams, were *Provincial* Congresses.

It was on such a community that the sun rose on the 19th of April, 1775. With it rose the Provincials, and the records of that day's deeds tell of the doings of the Provincials and the Regulars. That sun at its setting saw the British Army driven as a foreign enemy in disastrous rout to take shelter under the guns of its men of war in besieged Boston; and from that beleaguered camp and the help those guns afforded it never departed till Washington drove fleet and army away together in the following March. (Bunker Hill was but a resistance to an American advance which would have made Boston untenable.)

From that day to this no foreign power has ever held other possession in Massachusetts, nor has any control been exercised within her borders except that of her own people, original or delegated. Capt. Isaac Davis had said on leaving his home in Acton in the morning, "I have a right to go to Concord on the King's highway; and I will go to Concord;" but it was no longer a *King's* highway over which his body was carried home in the afternoon. The Royal Governor was wiped out; and martial law, which had practically prevailed, was formally declared within the British lines; and no civil authority

but that conferred by the citizens of Massachusetts has ever since been exercised within her limits.

A few years ago a bright young townsman of mine, of Irish descent, was an applicant for an appointment under the Government of the United States, and reported for examination before the Civil Service Commission. Among the questions asked him was this: "In what year did the United States become independent?" and he answered, "In 1775." The chairman of the examining board, whose fine culture was not devoid of humor, made merely this kindly comment: "Well, as you are from Concord, perhaps you have a right to think so."

The independence of Massachusetts was practically achieved on the 19th of April, 1775, though it waited to be *declared*, with that of her sister States, on the 4th of July, 1776.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts was born that day—the Commonwealth of our affection and our pride, ever increasing as the years of her illustrious history roll on. Long had been the preparation for her coming, and painful were the throes of the mighty delivery. She came to us, in maturity of strength and beauty, like Minerva from the head of Jupiter, and also like that fabled goddess, she came with the clash of arms. Her hand, ever hostile to tyranny, then

grasped the sword by which, as is seen in her crest and motto, she ever seeks peace under liberty:

Hæc Manus, inimica tyrannis,  
Ense petit placidam sub libertate quietem.

It was the vision of the soon-coming Commonwealth that fired the prophetic soul of Adams in his immortal utterance, "O, what an ever glorious morning is this!"; and I cannot but think that some glimpse of that beautiful and majestic presence must have illumined and cheered the dying eyes of the martyrs of Lexington, and of those who fell in the long and bloody conflict which began at Concord Bridge and ended at Charlestown Neck.

They saw her, plumed and mailed,  
With sweet, stern face unveiled,  
And all repaying eyes, look proud on them in death.

It is our Mother's birthday, and we desire to thank your Excellency, the honored and worthy Representative of the Commonwealth, for your presence with us today.

And is not this occasion, when for the first time we meet to celebrate the 19th of April with a full public recognition of its relation to the Commonwealth, the time to end forever all local bickerings and petty jealousies about the share that one or another town or village or hamlet

had in the events which have given the day its imperishable glory?

Whatever was done Massachusetts did it. No citizen of another province or colony took any part, though General Putnam reached Concord from his Connecticut home seventy miles off on the following day. But throughout Massachusetts the decisive day was known to be at hand, and the people were ready for it, with high resolve and stern determination. Western Massachusetts, not long before, on a false alarm had sent her militia and minutemen as far as Worcester on the road to Boston, when they learned that their movement was premature, and turned back. It was General Gage who determined at what time and place the collision should occur. The Provincial Congress had its deposit of military stores at Worcester as well as Concord; and if Gage had chosen to strike his blow in that direction, Watertown or Framingham might have been the Lexington, and Worcester the Concord, of the Revolution. The clouds of war were rolling up all round the horizon, and it was where hostile British bayonets and musket barrels should present themselves that decided where the thunderbolt should strike.

Lexington has the undying glory that it was her sons who were privileged to be the first



to give their lives for their country on the day we commemorate.

Concord remembers with satisfaction that it was at her old North Bridge, and by one of her sons, that the first order by an officer in command to the soldiers of the people to fire upon the troops of the king was given and obeyed.

Acton has its precious memory of its heroic Captain Davis who fell in front, and had not a man who was afraid to go.

Cambridge, and Arlington, and Danvers, and Woburn, and Lincoln, and Bedford, and Watertown, and Roxbury, and Groton, and Westford, and other towns, have graves and traditions which they keep with tender reverence.

But the transcendent fact remains. It was Massachusetts up in arms that day. No officer of hers "had a man that was afraid to go." No military organization, which had notice, failed to rush to the scene of action as speedily as time and distance would permit; and every man did what he could. Boston was in the iron grasp of General Gage's army; but Boston, which had furnished so much of the wise counsel and resolute will which sustained the defense of liberty, lighted the lanterns in the North Church steeple, and Joseph Warren sent Revere and Dorr to alarm the country. The soldiers from the towns who did not get notice in season, and



could not join in the pursuit of the British troops from Concord, were found on the next days a part of the besieging army that kept them where they had been driven. It was not for themselves, or for their towns only, but for Massachusetts and liberty that the men of 1775 risked life and so much that makes life dear. The memory of each is a precious possession to us all. Let us, when sounding their praise, join in harmonious voices.

And now I cannot forbear to ask our esteemed and patriotic friends, the Sons of the American Revolution, whose presence with us today we value so highly, to consider, at least by way of modest suggestion, whether the restriction of their membership to the lineal bodily descendants of participants in the Revolutionary struggle is, on the whole, wise or desirable, or had better be changed. The title to public consideration or leadership in public affairs by reason of descent is not an American idea. Every citizen of the Commonwealth, of whatever parentage, and wherever born, should feel her inspiration, and be a guardian of her fame. The Scripture tells us that none are Abraham's seed but those who do the works of Abraham. Mr. Emerson told Kosuth, when he came to Concord, that the dust of our heroes beneath the sod recognized his as a footstep kindred to their own.

The shot fired at the North Bridge was heard round the world.

Your Excellency's predecessor in 1850 said as truly as finely: "Not a blow struck for liberty among men since the 19th of April, 1775, but has echoed the guns of that eventful morning."

The great apostle has left us his testimony: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

Washington left no posterity, but every true American calls him father.

And so I would urge that on this memorable day, concerned with memories and events which should be dear to us all, every citizen of the Commonwealth who prefers honor and public service to selfishness and ease, who loves liberty, and will resist tyranny without counting the personal cost, wherever he was born and of whatever lineage after the flesh, that every true son of Massachusetts should have a right to call himself, and is,

A Son of the American Revolution.







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